Article Title

Employee Alienation in the Quick Service Restaurant Industry [Summary]

Citation

Abstract

An exploratory study conducted among 595 U.S. quick service restaurant hourly employees and managers for the purpose of measuring their level of work alienation finds that a significant proportion of the respondents expressed feelings of work alienation. The feelings seemed to be more prevalent among hourly employees, males, those younger, those more educated, and African Americans. But most important, the study indicates that employees' alienation was unequally distributed among the restaurants within the sample, therefore possibly suggesting that work alienation is not necessarily caused by the technology employed and/or the nature of the jobs but rather by the managerial styles and practices in each restaurant.

Keywords alienation, work alienation, employee alienation, quick service restaurants, employee engagement

Summary:

Based on the findings of this exploratory study, it is possible to conclude that for the respondents represented in this sample, many QSR employees—like their counterparts in numerous manufacturing industries (Blauner, 1964)— exhibit feelings of work alienation. The feelings seem to be more prevalent among hourly employees and those who are males, younger, more educated, and African Americans. Furthermore, the study also found that employees' alienation is not uniformly distributed among all QSRs, therefore suggesting that work alienation is not necessarily caused by the technology employed and/or the nature of the jobs but possibly by the leadership styles and managerial practices in each restaurant. This

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suggestion, if confirmed by future studies, would support the findings of Sarros et al. (2002), who found that transactional style leadership—leaders who emphasize formal procedures and reward or discipline their followers on the basis of their work performance—is often associated with high levels of alienation. If this holds true for other studies, the practical implications for this and other similar sectors of the hospitality industry are that despite the monotonous and unchallenging nature of many hospitality jobs, employees do not have to feel alienated from their work. With the proper leadership style and appropriate managerial techniques, employees can feel intrinsically motivated, have a sense of meaningfulness, and become actively engaged in their work.